

### Flu season 2009-2010: Something old, something new

This upcoming fall and winter will be a little different. Every year, somewhere between five and 20% of Americans become ill with seasonal flu. In addition to seasonal flu, health experts expect that H1N1 influenza (swine flu) will also circulate widely this fall and winter.

Since H1N1 influenza appeared this spring, health officials have been closely monitoring the disease and planning for the expected second wave of H1N1 influenza this fall. The severity of H1N1 illness is expected to be similar to the seasonal flu, and health experts believe large numbers of people may become infected and seek medical care.

Pregnant women, children and individuals with some underlying health conditions appear to be at higher risk for severe illness.

Drug manufacturers are producing an H1N1 vaccine that would protect against H1N1 influenza, and federal officials think there will be enough H1N1 vaccine for everyone who wants it. It is especially important that people at highest risk of complications from the flu receive flu vaccine:

- Pregnant women
- Children and young adults 6 months to 24 years of age
- Persons 25-64 years old who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from flu (e.g., cardiovascular disease, diabetes, asthma)
- Household members and caregivers of children younger than 6 months in age
- Healthcare workers and emergency medical service providers

While H1N1 flu and regular seasonal flu can be very serious, individuals, families, and organizations can take steps to prevent illness and prepare for this upcoming flu season. The H1N1 influenza vaccine does not protect against seasonal flu; Public Health recommends that seniors and others at risk for seasonal flu also get the seasonal flu vaccine.

Here are some ways to prepare:

- **Organizations and businesses** should review protocols for asking sick staff to stay at home, and develop ways to support staff that are ill, caring for ill family members, or recovering from the flu.
- **Families with school-aged children** should start talking to other families and neighbors about alternative child care plans if children are sick with flu or if schools or day cares are closed.

**As always, stay home when sick, cover coughs and sneezes, and wash hands often with soap and warm water.**

**For more information and future updates about H1N1 influenza visit:**

**[www.kingcounty.gov/health/h1n1](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/h1n1)**